

Evaluating the extent to which social researchers apply feminist and empowerment frameworks in photovoice studies with female participants

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In the last decades, we have witnessed a growing interest for the use of photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), also referred to as participatory photography, as a visual research method, particularly in social sciences. The method has substantially been applied in projects focusing on the lived experiences and problems from vulnerable women (e.g. Teti et al., 2012; Walsh et al., 2010).

In this presentation, the results of a systematic literature review on the topic are discussed. It investigates how the methodology has been applied in studies that focus on research with, on and about women. In the review, nineteen relevant articles were identified and analyzed using a descriptive within- and cross-case analysis. The potential of photovoice to 'give' voice to and empower female participants is evaluated. We illustrate how researchers have conceptualized these premises in their own studies and whether they are able to pull them through in their implementation phase.

The review shows that several authors claimed their study was inspired by feminist theory, however few were convincing in the way this was implemented in practice. Empowerment claims were made by many, however seldom evaluated at the end of the studies. The presentation outlines how female voices can manifest themselves in different phases of a research process and presents types of empowerment that can potentially be reached through photovoice.

References:

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